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XVI.—THE FABLIAU AND POPULAR
LITERATURE.

A recent study of the narrative art of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*¹ attempted to set forth some of the technical excellences of the Old French fabliaux, to call attention to their striking resemblance in form to the modern short-story, and, with all due appreciation of the originality of all Chaucer's work, to show that he was technically at his best in tales like the Miller's and the Reeve's, because he was writing under the influence of the best narrative art of the Middle Ages, under the influence of the fabliaux. If these contentions are true, the fabliaux, in spite of their very manifest imperfections,—their lack of style, of moral sense, of any ideal or uplifting quality,—cannot be neglected in any study of Chaucer, of the short-story, or of the history of narration. It is the purpose of the present essay to push the inquiry a step farther back, and to ascertain what were, in turn, some of the possible sources

¹ In the present volume of the *Publications*, pp. 1 ff.

of the technique of these early masterpieces of narration. The fabliaux themselves are, indeed, not all alike; they are to be found in all stages of elaboration, from the longer and more complex signed poems, which disclose an interest not only in plot, but also in character, emotions, scene, and even in moral significance, down to the mere anecdote, anonymous, brief, and simple. It is not difficult to see how the more complex fabliaux could be developed from the more simple. Seeking, however, forms still simpler and less developed than these latter, the critic is obliged to turn his back upon the literature of art and to examine the underlying stratum of the literature of the people. Such a procedure is suggested by the subtitle of Professor Bédier's *Les Fabliaux*,—"études de littérature populaire,"—by Professor Matthews's definition of the fabliau as "a realistic folk tale," and by the general impression produced by the fabliau of kinship with ballad and folk tale. And it is justified by our knowledge of the general fact that popular literature precedes and paves the way for the literature of art. Fabliaux, ballads, folk tales are, then, to be analyzed and compared with a view to ascertaining what the more developed forms owe to the less developed. In making such analyses and comparisons it is always an advantage when the whole matter can be focussed upon such single stories as may appear in the various forms concerned. Such a narrowing down of the field makes for simplicity and clearness, and, provided the examples chosen be typical, does not invalidate the general truth of the conclusions.

I. THE FABLIAU AND THE BALLAD.

*Queen Eleanor's Confession*¹ is a typical popular ballad and tells a story found also in the typical fabliau of *Le*

¹ Child, No. 156.

*Chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse.*¹ It offers, therefore, excellent opportunity for analysis and comparison. In substance it is as follows :

Queen Eleanor, fearing that she was about to die, sent for two friars of France. The King commanded Earl Martial to don a friar's coat, disguised himself in the same fashion, and swearing that he would not write down what the Queen might say, went with the Earl to hear her confession. She told them that she had sinned with Earl Martial, had made a box of poison strong to poison King Henry, and had poisoned Fair Rosamund in Woodstock bower. Earl Martial's son she loved best, King Henry's son least of all. When the King pulled off his friar's coat, she wrung her hands and cried that she was betrayed. King Henry declared that but for his oath Earl Martial should have been hanged.

This ballad "seems first to have got into print in the latter part of the seventeenth century, but was no doubt circulating orally some time before that, for it is in the truly popular tone."² If one may venture to take what has been called the "Simple Ballad,"³—ballad par excellence,—as a standard of the truly popular, one finds that *Queen Eleanor's Confession* is, in almost all respects, typical of the class. It was, and still is, sung.⁴ It has the necessary brevity: its five hundred words are one hundred less than the average. The scene of the action is Whitehall, but it is not visualized; France and Woodstock bower are named. There is no date, and there seems to be no passage of time. The persons form a narrow group; attention is focussed on husband, wife, and lover. "King," "Queen" and "Earl" reveal the ballad love of titles; and, while it is unusual that these figures should be historical personages, the ballad is loyal to the popular manner, rather than to history, in its perversion of fact.⁵ The

¹ Montaiglon-Raynaud, No. 16.

² Child, III, 257.

³ In the present writer's *Ballad and Epic*, pp. 8 ff.

⁴ Professor Gummere refers to Hardy's *Return of the Native*, Chapter III.

⁵ Cf. Child, II, 19.

characters are all more or less evil, are not further individualized, or described in any way; they are, in fact, mere doers of deeds. Emphasis upon emotion is unusual in the Simple Ballad, but the method in stanzas 19 and 20 is not unlike that in the ballad of *Lady Maisry*; and here, as there, the emotion is not named,¹ but expressed by "pantomime." The pantomime suggests, however, the vulgar convention of the broadside:

She shriekd and she cry'd, she wrong her hands,
And said she was betrayd.

More in the true ballad manner,

The King lookd over his left shoulder,
And a grim look looked he.

Structurally, *Queen Eleanor's Confession*, like ballads of the most primitive type, is a single situation.² This is the climax and close of the story, as final as a comic catastrophe can be. As in *Babylon*, the persons are all before us at once. The tale is told almost without preliminaries;³ nothing is said of the earlier relation of the King and Queen, and the history of the lovers is suppressed until it is revealed dramatically in the confession. The situation is developed almost wholly by dialogue, .71 as compared with the ballad average of .50 of direct discourse. The threefold repetitive confession involves group conversation of a primitively formal kind. The speeches are not all assigned, and, in general, one finds the abrupt transitions of the Simple Ballad. And when a "journey"

¹ Cf. *Ballad and Epic*, p. 57.

² Cf. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, pp. 113 ff.

³ For relative emphasis of Introduction, Situation, and Conclusion, see p. 338, below.

is traced the phrasing suggests the broadside style.¹ Yet the end is seen from the beginning; it is the King's oath in stanza 4 that compels a comic outcome of the threatened tragedy in stanza 20. While there is no refrain, repetition, incremental and other, is in the popular manner. Earl Martial approaches the King, and both approach the Queen, in parallel stanzas.² The Queen's confession falls into the conventional form of a group of three members, each consisting of two stanzas,—one of confession and one of comment. Of this comment two lines are the King's and two are Earl Martial's. The order of the confessions, however, is not climactic. Repetition heightens the contrast between the Queen's two sons. Question is repeated in answer.

For comic effect the balladist depends mainly on the irony of the situation. Because of a kind of poetic justice (the comment, "it served him right" is readily suggested, with the proverb about listeners) the husband's pain is comic, also. It is impossible to say how far the comic effect is calculated, yet the balladist's care, just noted, to provide the oath at the beginning to avoid a tragic outcome, looks like conscious art. Clearly, there is some sort of contrast here with the ballad habit of neglecting all special treatment in dealing with the Supernatural.³

For all its "innocuous humor" *Queen Eleanor's Confession* implies something of the cynicism of the Minstrel Ballad. It is not, of course, so described by either Professor Child or Professor Gummere, yet it has certain charac-

¹ Thus both attired then they go ;
When they came to Whitehall . . . (st. 6).

² Stanzas 3 and 7.

³ Cf. *Ballad and Epic*, pp. 20 ff. For tragic ballads of false wives see *Old Robin of Portingale* (80) or *Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard* (81), both very different in tone from *Queen Eleanor's Confession*.

teristics which recall such ballads as *The Boy and the Mantle*.¹ While the form is still truly popular, its use of historical personages, its knowledge of the world, the nature of its comic effects, imply professional rather than domestic tradition, minstrels rather than knitters and weavers. It would "suit the hall better than the bower, the tavern or public square better than the cottage, and would not go to the spinning-wheel at all."² In so far as it diverges from the Simple Ballad and approaches the Minstrel Ballad, it approaches also the fabliau,—how near we are now to see. The story of *Le Chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse* is, in substance, as follows :

In le Bessin, near Vire, there lived a knight, whose wife was famous in that country for her courtesy and fine breeding. Her husband so loved her and had such faith in her that he trusted her in everything and left all his affairs in her hands. So they lived happily for many years until the lady fell ill, and, fearing that she was about to die, was confessed by her priest. Not satisfied, however, she desired her husband to send for the prior of a near-by monastery, that he also might give her absolution. The knight declared that he himself would go, and, as he rode along, thinking of his wife, there came into his mind a desire to know whether she was really as good as all supposed her. So, instead of summoning the prior, he borrowed his habit, and waiting until after night-fall, returned, thus disguised, to hear his wife's confession. At his own house a squire took his horse and a maid-servant conducted him to his lady's bedside. He admonished her to conceal nothing, and she, failing, because of her great illness, his disguise, his changed voice, and the darkness, to recognize her husband, confessed to having sinned with a squire, and to having been intimate, for five years, with her husband's nephew, for he alone could, without arousing suspicion, be with her at all times. And she had not only granted him her favor, but had shared with him her husband's fortune as well, for she had control of all his property; she was ruler

¹ Child, No. 29. The same story is told in an Old French fabliau, but *The Boy and the Mantle*, like *Crow and Pie* (111), "is not a purely popular ballad, but rather of that kind which . . . may be called the minstrel-ballad."—Child, II, 478. It is, in fact, practically a fabliau, and thus not valuable for purposes of contrast.

² Child, I, 257.

of the house and had made her husband nothing in it. The supposed friar now imposed suitable penance and extracted from her a solemn promise never, if she lived, to love another man. Then, in wrath, he left her and meditated revenge. Next day the wife was surprised at her husband's coldness, but not until he heard her, one day, giving orders in her old proud manner, did he accuse her of the crimes she had confessed. She readily understood that it had been he who had heard her confession, and immediately declared that she had at once recognized his voice, protested her innocence, and accused him of being a traitor and coward in having thus come to her in disguise and attempted to betray her. So much and so long did she protest that he was at last compelled to believe that she spoke the truth. The story provoked many a jest and many a laugh in le Bessin.

Composed, not for singing, but for recitation, this story is not told, like *Queen Eleanor's Confession*, in ballad stanzas, but in a form which is, if anything, even more primitive,¹ in the regular fabliau couplets of four accents in each verse. Its greater elaboration requires more than three times as many words.² As in the ballad, the action is localized,—at le Bessin, near Vire. The scene, however, changes from the home of the knight to the monastery and back. It is not more definitely indicated, and not visualized. Unlike the balladist, the trouvère is conscious of the passage of time: husband and wife, he tells us, had long lived happily together; the lady's illness lasted three weeks; she had loved the nephew five years. The time of action in the story proper is carefully indicated: the knight did not venture to return, in his disguise, until after dark; he had promised to bring back the prior's habit by midnight, and so rode away after the confession, and did not return until next day. It was not until "one day,"—clearly several days later,—that his wife made her vigorous defence.

While the fabliau elaborates, it compresses, and attention is now fixed, in the main situation at least, wholly on wife

¹ Cf. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, p. 60, n. 2.

² About 1700.

and husband; the lover is not obliged to hear the confession; no children are mentioned. The prior, however, is a new character, even with some individuality; and priest, servants, and squires are mentioned. All are lower in rank, the familiar "chevalier," "dame," and priest of the fabliaux. The trouvère begins with an account of the relations of husband and wife, emphasizing, for contrast with what is to follow, her excellent reputation, his long-established faith in her, and their perfect harmony. This contrast is heightened by the lady's description of her own character: "I am held in great esteem," she says, "but I am really a hypocrite and a false wife." More noteworthy is the characterization of the prior: he was an upright man and a courteous; when he saw the knight he hastened to welcome him and to receive him hospitably. This description is, doubtless, inserted simply for the purpose of furnishing a motive, and so lending an air of probability to the prior's one function in the story, the loan of his habit to a layman. Throughout, the variety of methods of characterization is noteworthy,—words, actions, epithets, reputation, self-description. In further contrast with the ballad, moreover, more detail of the husband's disguise is given,—the prior's high boots and cloak and hood of black cloth.

Still in the interests of probability, the fabliau introduces some study of mental states. Thus the knight's great love for his lady led him to go himself for the prior, and his thought of her, as he rode, easily became a curiosity to know how perfect she really was; and of this curiosity came naturally the plan to act himself as her confessor. When he heard her confession he "wrinkled his nose in wrath,"¹ and wished that sudden death might overtake her; he trembled with anger and with hatred of the wife

¹ De mautalent le nez fronci (v. 135).

whom he had loved so much and prized so highly; the thought of vengeance alone comforted him; when he heard her giving orders as usual, he looked at her, shook his head wrathfully, and threatened to kill her. And we see into her mind as well as into his: we learn that it was the fear of death that led her to desire absolution; that she was deceived by her husband's disguise; that she marveled, next day, that he who was wont to kiss and embrace her did not deign even to speak to her; and that she was not at all at ease when he accused her of her crimes, until she understood how he had learned of them. Here again the variety in method is noteworthy,—epithet, words, “pantomime,” “physiological psychology.” Nice observation must have supplied the nose wrinkling, and the head shaking, in wrath. That the purpose of it all is motivation, verisimilitude, is manifest.

Structurally, the fabliau develops the situation of the ballad, but prefixes an introduction to heighten the effect, and works out the wife's defence at the end. For she is now saved, not by her husband's oath, but, in conformity with fabliau tradition, by her own cleverness and his gullibility. If the story really developed in this way, as seems most likely, proportion and emphasis were determined by its history. If, that is, the germ of it was the Wife's Confession, it is natural that this should still be regarded as of most importance, and be elaborated at greatest length.¹ Yet, as has been said, the lover is not present, as he is in the ballad: and the scene with the prior, and the later scene with the wife are elaborated for introduction and conclusion.

¹ The difference in emphasis and proportion can be shown most clearly by means of the following table. In the fabliau twenty per cent. of the story is taken from the Confession. Of this four per cent. is added to the Introduction, and sixteen to the Wife's Reply.

The latter renders the situation less final, more comic in effect. For purposes of contrast the earlier history of husband and wife is sketched. The main situation is still developed largely by means of dialogue.¹ The group conversation disappears with the lover; soliloquy (thought, purpose, emotion) is added to dualogue; and the wife's reply may be described as monologue. The ballad repetition has completely disappeared and with it the artificiality; the confession scene now wears the aspect of a real conversation, though the order of the revelations is less climactic than in the ballad. The speeches are assigned and gaps are filled in by "journeys" and by details of action. Thus when the knight had promised to fetch the prior he rode away on the horse he had mounted, and ambling along the road, thought of his wife. His arrival, his dismounting, his return on the prior's horse, which ambled slowly; his concealment of his face in his hood, his reception by the servants,—all this is traced with a care quite foreign to the ballad. Manifestly, too, the situation as a whole is foreseen and more carefully motivated. And not content

	QUEEN ELEANOR'S CONFESSION.		LE CHEVALIER CONFESSEUR.	
	Words.	Per Cent.	Words.	Per Cent.
Introduction.	144	.30	582	.34
Confession.....	300	.62	714	.42
Transition.....	24	.05	96	.05
Wife's Reply.....	12	.03	324	.19
	<u>480</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1716</u>	<u>1.00</u>

¹ Now, however, only .62, as compared with the .71 of the ballad.

with concealing the wife's wickedness up to the moment of confession, the *trouvère* emphasizes her reputed virtue and her fine breeding, thus increasing the shock of surprise. In the same way he expressly states that she did not recognize her husband, in order to give full significance to her statement that she did.

As in the ballad, the main source of the comic effect is the irony of the situation and the pain of the husband in learning, in a kind of poetic justice, that he has been betrayed. This result of his trick seems less expected than in the ballad. To this must now be added the contrast between the husband's hoped-for revenge and his disappointment, as well as whatever amusement may be derived from the final deception of the gullible husband and the evil cleverness of the wife. As his closing lines in regard to the amusement of those who heard the story show, the *trouvère* was fully alive to its comic character. At the beginning, too, he calls it a "marvel." His anxiety for verisimilitude, also, of which ample evidence has been cited,¹ is further indication of his critical powers. Closely akin to these is, finally, his faculty for general comment upon life.²

Analyses of these typical examples of Ballad and Fabliau leave one mainly impressed with the contrast between the two. Both, indeed, are in the main popular in matter and manner,—anonymous, relatively impersonal, in primitive metres. In both, the action, though roughly localized, is not placed in a visualized setting. In both the attention is focussed on a small group of persons, with a few others in the background, but with little suggestion of the world

¹ Cf., however, the careful explanation of the lady's failure to recognize her husband,—because of her great illness, his changed voice, and the darkness of the room illuminated only by a night lamp.

² Cf. vv. 103 ff., 126 ff., 204 ff.

and society at large. From the ideal point of view all the characters in both are evil. Structurally, both are grasped as wholes, ends are seen from beginnings. And in each the main thing is a situation involving comic irony, and implying a cynical view of life.

The contrasts are more striking. There is, in the first place, the obvious difference in metre,—the ballad was composed for singing, the fabliau for recitation. The fabliau is more than three times as long. It emphasizes and traces carefully, with reference to the action, the passage of time. It suppresses the lover, and introduces and develops the character of the prior. In general, the persons become more real, no longer mere human agents, but types. Emotion and thought, mainly to be heard between the lines of the ballad, is, with a view to motivation and verisimilitude, carefully traced in the fabliau.

Taking as its own the primitive situation furnished by the ballad, the fabliau elaborates it and adds to it. It substitutes for the repetitive confession a natural conversation, taking account of accompanying thought and action. At the same time it makes the situation relatively shorter, adds a preliminary sketch of the chief persons and their relations, and develops a new conclusion on the basis of the general fabliau tradition of the character of the false wife. It fills in gaps, makes transitions, traces journeys. The situation furnished by the ballad, however, is still the matter of chief interest. It has the same comic irony. But other comic effects are now worked out, new contrasts between expectation and fulfilment. Though in this elaboration of the story the inevitable ballad unity of time, place, and point of view, is lost, unity of impression is in no way impaired, and the deception of the wife gains much in verisimilitude. In matter and manner there is evidence

of a new power of criticism, not only of literature, but of life.

These differences, however, striking as they are, are not to blind one to the marked resemblances of fabliau and ballad. Any classification of literary types must place these two close together. To contrast with both what may be regarded as a modern development of the same story is to make this clear. De Maupassant, in *L'Inutile Beauté*, takes this same theme, modernizes it, refines it, elaborates it, almost past recognition. Yet there is in the technique of his story nothing essentially new, nothing that is not to be found, though perhaps only in the faintest foreshadowing, in the fabliau. The wife no longer lies in her Defence, but in her Confession. The story is no longer comic, but deeply serious; and it is pushed to a serious and significant conclusion. In the end the husband, Count de Mascaret, "sentit soudain, il sentit par une sorte d'intuition que cet être là n'était plus seulement une femme destinée à perpétuer sa race, mais le produit bizarre et mystérieux de tous nos désirs compliqués, amassés en nous par les siècles, détournés de leur but primitif et divin, errant vers une beauté mystique, entrevue et insaisissable." To attain to this conception of his wife the Count de Mascaret had to hear from her lips the solemn declaration that one of her children was not his, and, after six years of torturing doubt, to learn that this declaration had been a lie, that she had, in fact, always been faithful to him.

There are obvious contrasts,—the fourfold increase in length, the prose for private reading substituted for the verse for public recitation, a distinctive style and technique, for the old impersonal manner. While the attention is again focussed on husband and wife, the figures in the background,—the servants, the seven children, the governess and the tutor, the audience at the opera, the two friends who

discussed the Count and Countess, the people in the crowded streets,—all have become more real. The action is set in a real and visible world. It falls into two parts, separated by six years, one, an afternoon, evening, and night, the other, an evening. The persons are still, from the ideal point of view, evil. But they are far more complex, not wholly good or bad, but human. Doubtless we are to regard the wife as justified in her lie. The lover, from being present in the ballad, absent though existent in the fabliau, has become purely imaginary. Studies of mental states are elaborate and continual.

The Confession has ceased to be the main thing; de Maupassant is interested rather in the moral question involved in its motive, in the results of the long-sustained situation which it creates, in the immediate emotional effects, in the reaction upon character and upon the relations of husband and wife. The Introduction is put into the mouth of the Countess, an impassioned exposition, which gives the reader the necessary information, yet carries the story rapidly forward, with increasing suspense. A thoroughly modern motive is here substituted for the traditional trick of the fabliau. Unities of time, place, persons, point of view, are disregarded, yet the story remains essentially one, true to its heritage, from ballad and fabliau, of singleness of impression, of "dramatic concentration." Most striking is the development, from the foreshadowings in the fabliau conversation of husband and wife, of the criticism of life and human relations. The story as a whole has come to have a moral purpose, exists to enforce a moral concept; one whole scene, nearly a third of the story, is given over to the discussion of it by persons introduced and characterized simply for that purpose; and only when the husband has grasped it, can the story end.

II. THE FABLIAU AND THE FOLK TALE.

It is important to distinguish, at the beginning of our inquiry, between the two principal types of the folk tale, between *märchen* and *schwank*. This suggestive distinction is discussed in an admirable dissertation by Dr. L. F. Weber. He defines the *märchen* as "eine mit dichterischer phantasie entworfene erzählung:" the *schwank* is the name for "einen lustigen streich, und die erzählung eines solchen." *Märchen* may be translated *fairy tale*; for *schwank* there is no English equivalent. Dr. Weber points out the differences in technique between these two types and refers them to the differences in author, audience, and material. The *märchen* is, typically, told by nurses to women and children, is a tale of wonder which may be trusted to produce its own effect. The *schwank*, on the other hand, is, typically, told by men, in the tavern, is comic and can, therefore, be told in only the one way fitted to produce the desired effect. Hence the *schwank* is subjective in the sense that the narrator is obliged to think of technique, to plan carefully for the effect he intends. One may venture, then, to regard the *schwank* as less primitive than the *märchen*, implying more emphatically an audience and a narrator, the latter endowed with special skill, self-conscious, critical, calculating.

*Das Bürle*¹ is a fairly typical *schwank*, and contains a wholly typical scene, which is found, in elaborated form, in the fabliau of *Le Povre Clerc*.² It offers, therefore, excellent opportunity for analysis and comparison. In substance it is as follows:

¹ Grimm, no. 61. Dr. Weber regards *Das Bürle* as a *schwankmärchen*. Yet it differs from the *schwank* proper only in that it consists of a series of events instead of a single event.

² Montaiglon-Raynaud, No. 132.

In a wealthy village lived one poor peasant who owned not so much as a cow, but did so wish to have one. So he had the carpenter construct a calf of wood, and paint it brown, hoping that in time it would grow and become a cow. The carpenter cut and planed the calf, and painted it, and made it with its head hanging down as if it were grazing. At the peasant's request the cowherd carried it to pasture, but seeing that it would not come when he called, returned without it. When the owner went to look for it, it had been stolen, so he complained to the mayor, and the cowherd had to give him a cow.

But the peasant couldn't feed his cow, so he killed it, salted the meat, and set out to sell the skin in the town. On the way he saw a raven with broken wings, and out of pity he wrapped him in the hide and carried him along. A storm compelled the little peasant to stop at a mill and ask shelter. The miller's wife, who was alone, gave him bread and cheese to eat and straw to lie on in the corner, and thought that he went to sleep. So she welcomed the priest and prepared a feast for him. But just as they were ready to begin her husband came home, and she had to conceal the meat, the wine, the salad, the cake, and the priest. The miller demanded supper and invited the stranger to join him. Asked about his raven Bürle declared that he was a soothsayer,—“he tells four things, but keeps the fifth to himself.” Bürle interpreted the raven's croaks as directions where to find meat, wine, salad, and cake, and the delighted miller agreed to pay three hundred thalers for one more prophecy. This was to the effect that the devil was in the cupboard. When the cupboard was opened the priest ran out and the miller exclaimed, “It was true, I saw the black fellow with my own eyes!”

When the peasant was brought before the mayor to explain his new prosperity he said that he had sold his cowhide in the town for three hundred thalers. Thereupon all the peasants killed their cows and took the hides to town; but they got less than two thalers each for them. So they decreed that the little peasant should be put in a cask pierced full of holes, and rolled into the water. The priest who came to say a mass for his soul was the one whom he had seen with the miller's wife. He said to him: “I set you free from the cupboard; set me free from the barrel.” Just then a shepherd came up who desired to be mayor and Bürle persuaded him that the proper way was to be closed up in the barrel. Bürle went off with the sheep and the peasants rolled the shepherd down into the water.

The peasants went home, and as they entered the village saw Bürle driving a flock of sheep and looking quite contented. He had found them, he said, at the bottom of the water. Then all the peasants plunged in to look for sheep. So all the village was dead, and Bürle, as sole heir, became a rich man.

The parallel fabliau makes use of but part of this tale ; this is the scene in the mill ; and this will, for the most part, engage our attention. Passing reference, however, must be made to typical characteristics in other parts of the story.

The time of the action is not the dim past, the typical "once upon a time" of the *märchen*. It is not stated, but gives the impression of the present, or, at least, of a past immediate and vivid. The place of action is regularly indicated ; in the event under consideration it is the mill, or rather the single room in the mill where dwelt the miller and his wife. Its contents indicate its use : the straw in the corner where the peasant was invited to take his rest ; the tiled stove, the bed¹ and pillow, the cupboard in the entrance, where were concealed meat and wine, salad, cakes, and priest ; clearly, this real and humble interior is very different from the gorgeousness desired by the *märchen*. The persons of the tale are no less humble, not only those who appear in the scene in the mill,—peasant, priest, miller, and miller's wife,—but also those who appear throughout the story. Unlike the *märchen*, the *schwank* does not marry its peasant hero to a princess. Unlike the *märchen*, too, the *schwank* is concerned with but a single generation. The namelessness of persons and places is rather a *märchen* than a *schwank* trait. The presence of domestic animals, realistic in effect, is in the way of the true *schwank*, however, and the soothsaying raven is perhaps to be regarded as a *schwank* parody of the speaking birds of the *märchen*.

Nowhere are the persons directly described, and nothing is said of personal appearance ; through words and actions alone we gain our knowledge of character. The mayor

¹ Where apparently the miller's wife went to bed and took the keys with her.

of the neighboring town thus reveals himself most satisfactorily. "My servant must go first," he said, when the peasants planned to sell their cowhides to the merchant. And when it was proposed to fetch the sheep from the bottom of the water he declared, "I come first." At the water's edge he pressed forward and said, "I will go down first and look about me, and if things promise well I'll call you."

From the *märchen* point of view the persons of the tale are all evil, except perhaps the miller, who is good-natured, at least, if somewhat stupid and gluttonous,—the typical gullible husband of the *schwank*. The relations of his wife and the priest are clearly characteristic, and are taken for granted as a common situation, requiring no explanation. The character of the hero is not altogether clear. Manifestly, he is a rogue, but seems to blunder into the clever things he does and says. At the beginning of the tale he is apparently stupid enough to have built a wooden calf in the hope that in time it will grow and become a cow. It does not appear that he foresaw the astonishing success of the experiment. And it is not said that he had a definite plan in mind when he declared that his raven was a sooth-sayer. Doubtless we are to suppose that he had such a plan, and, like the typical rogue hero of the *schwank*, intended to make use of a stupid belief in the supernatural in order to deceive his victim. This is, in the main, his method throughout the tale; his ulterior purpose, even the fact that he had an ulterior purpose, is, doubtless, intentionally concealed, in each case, for purposes of surprise. Thus any lack of clearness in character is the result of the use of an artifice of plot.

And if the central motive,—the relative stupidity and cleverness of the little peasant,—is not altogether clear, great pains are taken with the minor motivation. Bürle

passed the mill on the way to sell his cowhide ; he took the wounded raven out of pity ; he sought shelter at the mill because of the storm ; the miller's wife received the priest because her husband was out, and because she supposed Bürle to be asleep ; when the peasant heard her speak about feasting "he was vexed that he had been forced to make shift with a slice of bread with cheese on it,"—and so on. Apparently the narrator is making a special effort to get his story believed. It is scarcely necessary to call attention to the fact that he is not wholly successful. Thus it is manifestly improbable that the miller's wife should entertain the priest while Bürle lies on the straw in the corner of the same room, even if she does suppose him to be asleep. Moreover, the stupidity of the cowherd, the shepherd, and the peasants generally, is beyond the limits of credibility, though perhaps frankly and laughably so, as in many examples of typical American humor. For all this, it is clear that the narrator of our schwank does try to provide for objections, to furnish adequate motives for the actions, and, in this respect, differs significantly from the narrator of the märchen. This emphasis on motives leads even to some description, or suggestion by words and actions, of mental states,—the peasant's pity and vexation, the wife's fear, the miller's curiosity.

Structurally, *Das Bürle* is not a typical schwank, for it consists not of a single event, but of a series of events. Nevertheless, it has not the inorganic structure of the märchen, the transitions from one event to another are carefully motivated,—the scene at the mill results from killing the cow, and the success of this adventure leads to a general slaughter of cows in the village, resulting in the attempted punishment of the peasant and his escape and triumph. At the beginning of the story he is the one poor peasant in a prosperous village ; at the end he is sole survivor and possessor of all the wealth. Clearly, the story

was conceived as a well-rounded whole, with a sense of proportion and of the relative values of beginning, middle, and end. It is very interesting to note that the second event, the scene in the mill, is the longest of the three.¹ The internal structure of this scene shows the same sense of proportion and relative values. The preliminary or transitional motive is treated rapidly, the last and most important part of the scene is most fully elaborated.² There is further evidence of grasp of the scene as a whole in the admirable foresight and preparation. The raven is mentioned at the moment the peasant finds him, though he is not needed until the last incident of the scene; the husband's absence is mentioned when the peasant enters the room,³ though it does not become significant until he returns, driven home by the same storm that led the peasant to ask for shelter.⁴

Thus, without backing and filling, the narrative moves forward steadily, but not too rapidly. The narrator knows how to conceive a climax, to approach it gradually, to hold back his point as long as possible. As has been said, he does not tell us that Bürle had any ulterior purpose in making the wooden calf, or in declaring his raven a sooth-

¹ The figures are, roughly,—

1. The Wooden Calf, .19.
2. The Event in the Mill, .42.
3. The Triumph of Bürle, .39.

² Cf. p. 367, below.

³ It is further noteworthy that the priest is allowed to escape without a beating because it is necessary for him to befriend the little peasant later in the story. In the fabliau, we shall see presently, this source of comic effect is possible, because the story ends here.

⁴ This art of preparation is not obvious or inevitable. A moment of hesitation, followed by "Oh, I had forgotten to say," etc., is not uncommon with more cultivated, if less skilful, narrators. See Stevenson's comment on Scott's neglect of "preparation," *Memories and Portraits* (1898), p. 272.

sayer, or in telling the peasants that he had found his sheep at the bottom of the water. Thus, too, the narrator not only leads up, through a series of four, to the raven's chief revelation,—the presence of the devil-priest in the cupboard,—but also takes especial pains to hold back the last member of the series: "The miller would have liked much to know the fifth, but the little peasant said, 'First we will quickly eat the four things, for the fifth is something bad.' So they ate, and after that they bargained how much the miller was to give for the fifth prophecy, until they agreed on three hundred thalers." No less noteworthy is the narrator's effective use of contrast: he does not fail to emphasize the difference between Bürle lying on the straw in the corner, eating bread and cheese, and Bürle sitting at the table, sharing with the miller the supper prepared for the priest, and finally departing, three hundred thalers the richer for his adventure. A typical characteristic of the structure of popular narrative is the use of repetition, and for this the five prophecies of the raven offer an excellent opportunity. This is, naturally, made use of by the narrator. Four of the prophecies are developed by two sentences of simple "incremental repetition:" "Bürle . . . sprach, 'erstens (zweitens, drittens, viertens), hat er gesagt, es steckte Wein unterm Kopfkissen' (wäre Braten in der Ofenkachel, Salat auf dem Bett, Kuchen unterm Bett). 'Das wäre des Guckgucks!' rief der Müller, gieng hin und fand den Wein (Braten, Salat, Kuchen)." The fifth member of the series, the close and climax, is, of course, differently phrased. The series of five members is, perhaps, an exaggeration or parody of the customary series of three of the *märchen*.

The use of dialogue is interesting. Thirty-three per cent. of the tale is in this form, and there is, in addition, a good deal of indirect discourse. There is no group

conversation or soliloquy; monologue and dialogue are common. The former reveals mental states, the thoughts and feelings of the miller's wife and of the peasant, and character, as in the case of the mayor, cited above. The latter is used to expound purposes and motives, as in the case of the planning of the wooden calf; to carry on the action in concrete and dramatic fashion, throughout the tale; and situations where one person moves another to act, as where Bürle persuades the cowherd to carry the wooden calf to pasture, the peasants to sell their cowhides, the foolish shepherd to enter the cask, etc.

So far as comic effects are concerned, it will be obvious at once that our schwank depends mainly upon comic disappointments, contrasts between expectation and fulfilment. Illustration is not necessary. Chance, the intriguer, and his victims, are all to blame. Thus it is quite by chance that the peasant finds the raven, comes to the mill on the same night as the priest, and meets the miller there, just as it is quite by chance that the same priest is appointed to say a mass for the little peasant's soul, or that this particular shepherd, who desired to become mayor, passes at just this moment. Yet these are merely opportunities; it requires a particularly quick and clever intriguer to make use of them all for the discomfiture of his victims. And the victims, in each case, are only too eager to walk into the traps thus set for them.

Comic effect depends also on incongruity in character, though in less degree. This consists mainly in the implied contrast of the incredible stupidity of Bürle's victims with the normal intelligence of men. But there is contrast also with the moral norm in priest and miller's wife and in the selfish officiousness of the mayor. Yet there is no suggestion whatever of a satirical tendency. With no thought of judging, no sense of superiority, narrator and audience

simply enjoy these comic imperfections, moral as well as intellectual. Enjoyment, however, never approaches sympathy with the victims; there are no regrets for the cheated cowherd or miller, for the poor shepherd who is drowned in the cask in Bürle's place, even for the whole village, when, led by the mayor, they find death instead of sheep at the bottom of the water.¹

Absence of sympathy, of pathos, of any suggestion of seriousness, complete control of the story by the schwank feeling, as opposed to the märchen feeling, are striking characteristics. And if an unconscious and instinctive sense of fitness has preserved this unity of impression in the story as a whole, it has preserved, all the more completely, in the scene at the mill, this and the other unities,—of place, of time, of action, of persons, even of point of view.

The story of *Le Povre Clerc* is, in substance, as follows :

A clerk, compelled by poverty to leave Paris and return to his home, found himself, at the end of a day's walk, tired and hungry, with no shelter for the night. Approaching a peasant's house, he found there the peasant's wife and a maid-servant, and asked for a lodging. On the ground of her husband's absence the wife refused, and would not listen to the plea of the poor scholar, who had been walking since early morning. As he spoke, a man brought in two casks of wine and the wife ran to conceal them in a dark corner. Meanwhile he saw the maid baking cake and taking pork from the pot and placing it on a platter. The poor clerk stood hesitating on the threshold. "How nice it would be if I might remain," he said; but all to no purpose; he heard the door slam as he turned away.

¹ Like the savage punishment of wicked mothers-in-law, or the wanton beheading of unsuccessful suitors, in the märchen, this comic view of death, in the schwank, is doubtless a survival from primitive beginnings. It is not uncommon in popular literature,—see the variant versions of the tale now under discussion, and tales like that of the Three Monks of Colmar (*Gesammtabenteuer*, No. 62). But much the same thing appears in the familiar modern story of the Texas vigilance committee which hanged an innocent man for a horse-thief, and concluded its letter of apology to the widow, "We can only say, Madame, that the joke is on us."

Not far from the house he met a man in the dress of a priest, who stole past him without greeting, and was received with honor where he had been turned away. "Where am I to stay this night," he cried. The peasant, returning from the mill with a sack of flour for his children's bread, heard him and invited him to return. When she heard her husband knock, the woman concealed the priest in the stable [*croiche*] and opened the door. Asked to prepare a meal for the guest, she declared that she had nothing in the house, and could only bake bread with the flour which her husband had just brought in.

As they waited, the peasant asked the clerk to pass the time by telling the story of some adventure or song which he had read or heard. The clerk replied that he knew no *fable*, but would tell the story of a great fright which he had just had. Passing through a forest he had seen a herd of swine attacked by a wolf who chose for his meal one of the herd whose flesh was "as fat as the meat that your servant took but just now from the pot." So the wife had to produce the pork. "The blood," the clerk went on, "was as red as the wine that the man was carrying into your house when I stopped to ask for a lodging." In his fright the clerk had thrown a stone, as big as the cake that the servant was baking, at the wolf, who appeared very much like the priest "who is now looking at us through the window." The priest got a beating, and the poor scholar feasted on meat, wine, and cake, and was given the priest's cloak into the bargain.

It is evident that the fabliau selects but one of the scenes of the schwank. This it proceeds to elaborate into a story of about 1,500 words, nearly twice as long as the mill scene in the schwank. With the details of this elaboration we are now concerned.

The reality and immediacy of effect is carried a little farther. The time of the action is no less the present. The place is still unnamed, but it is in France, a day's march from Paris, where the clerk has been studying; the scene is a room in the peasant's house; whether it is the only room or not is not clear, for we learn nothing of its contents. Apparently door and window connect it with the stable. We now find ourselves a degree higher in the social scale. The hero is not a peasant, but a clerk, who, by studying at Paris, connects the story with the known world. Like Bürle, however, he is distinguished by his poverty. His

host is not a miller, but a peasant, who is bringing flour from the mill for his children's bread. He is a person of more importance than the miller, since man and maid servant are in his employ. These last, and the children, are fabliau additions to the *dramatis personæ* of the *schwank*. As in the *schwank*, all are nameless. The raven and the domestic animals disappear.

Again with the exception of the husband, the characters are all evil. There is the same cynical view of the relations of priests, women, and husbands, typical alike of *schwank* and *fabliau*. There is no reason to suppose that the clerk was better than the usual clerk intriguer of the *fabliau*, though he is in no way blameworthy in the present story. As has been said, he is justified in mentioning what he had seen, and unlike *Bürle*, he does not practice any deception upon his host. The priest remains the same lay figure. The miller's wife is, in the interests of poetic justice, made a less agreeable person, who sends the hungry clerk away from her door instead of offering him even the meager hospitality of bread and cheese and a bed of straw. She is less passive and silent than her *schwank* prototype, and attempts to explain to her husband the presence of meat, cake, and wine. He is perhaps somewhat less gullible. At any rate, though he seems to believe her excuses, he is not called upon to give credit to the powers of a sooth-saying raven. Though more irritable, he is at the same time more hospitable, a shade more complex than his prototype. The hero appears in a more favorable light. His little intrigue or trick is more justifiable; and there is nothing in the *fabliau* to suggest that he is stupid.

As in the *schwank*, we gain our knowledge of the persons, not from direct descriptions¹ of appearance or

¹ Except that the miller's wife is described as being very proud in manner, "*mout fu de fier contement*" (v. 24).

character, but from words and actions, as in the contrasted receptions of the clerk by the peasant and by his wife, the peasant's declaring that his house is his own, to receive whom he likes, his wrath at finding nothing for his guest to eat, the priest's passing the clerk without greeting.

While we have, in the *schwank*, the trick partly for the supper, but mainly for its own sake, we have, in the *fabliau*, the trick for purposes of revenge. And, perhaps because the scene stands alone, and is not one of a series of similar adventures, there is less emphasis upon the character of the intriguer. Though the story is simplified by the omission of the raven, there is the same care in minor motivation: the clerk's poverty (a common *fabliau* motive); his hunger and weariness; the husband's trip to the mill for flour for his children;¹ his desire to hear stories, leading directly to the clerk's narrative of his great fright. In neither story is it quite clear why the hero should employ stratagem at all. In the *schwank*, gratitude, perhaps, causes him to spare the wife; in the *fabliau*, fellow-feeling causes him to spare the priest; in both cases, doubtless, he gains the husband's favor more completely by this means. In the *schwank*, the marvelous insight of the raven wins his owner three hundred thalers. This pseudo-supernatural element seems to have been lost from the *fabliau* and to have been replaced by something not so effective. The *fabliau*, however, manifestly improves upon the *schwank* in doing away with the improbable third person in the room, and provides more vigorous motive for the intriguer's action in the wife's refusal to admit him at all. The feelings of the hungry clerk, as he stands on the threshold and sees preparations for the feast, are, the

¹ Yet this does not account, as the storm does in the *schwank*, for the husband's unexpected return. The *schwank* is clearly, in this respect, superior.

trouvère evidently thinks, better imagined than described. Elsewhere, however, motives are emphasized, as in the schwank, by brief references to emotions,—to the husband's vexation, or the wife's fear.

Structurally, the fabliau differs from the schwank in that it consists of a single event, rather than of a series. This structure is, however, the rule for the schwank; *Das Bürle* is exceptional. It is also the rule for the fabliau. Compared with the internal structure of the mill scene in *Das Bürle*, *Le Povre Clerc*, as a whole, shows the same sense of proportion and relative values; the same parts of the story receive much the same emphasis.¹ There is really no significant difference, except that the trouvère permits himself to add a "moral," to the effect that one should never send away any man in haste from one's door,—had not the peasant's wife been inhospitable the clerk would not have said a word. Thus the whole story is interpreted as an example of poetic justice, and this "moral," however curious it may seem to modern readers, is interesting as evidence of the trouvère's power to comment on the action. His opening line, similarly, reveals a self-consciousness beyond the narrator of the schwank: he does not, he says, wish to tell a long story. And he has clearly a firm grasp of his tale as a whole, makes adequate preparation for whatever is to come. The poor and hungry scholar sees, as he stands on the threshold, wine and meat and cake; and presently he meets the priest in the street. When the husband knocks at the door the priest conceals himself in the stable, later looking through the window at the clerk. Thus each incident is mentioned in its proper place. There is no backing and filling; the narrative moves steadily forward; as in the schwank, the climax,—the discovery of the priest,—

¹ See p. 367, below.

is approached through a series of less important incidents, now three in number instead of four. Unlike the *schwank*, however, is the absence of special effort to delay the climax;¹ it is introduced in exactly the same manner as the other incidents, though distinguished by the different effect produced upon the peasant. This series of incidents, obviously, offers an opportunity, in the *fabliau* as in the *schwank*, for verbal repetition, but of this the *trouvère* does not avail himself.² The same contrasts are involved in the story.

Of dialogue there is, relatively, nearly twice as much in the *fabliau* as in the *schwank*.³ There is relatively less indirect discourse. The increase in amount of dialogue is due largely to the fact that the clerk's story of his great fright takes the place of the soothsaying raven. The interruptions of the peasant, too, are longer, and each time his wife has something to say, does not simply go to bed and take the keys with her, as in the *schwank*. There is thus, in the successive incidents leading up to the climax, a series of group conversations. In each case the order of speeches is the same, the form is the simplest possible. What is remarkable is the presence of group conversation in any form; it is unusual, if not unparalleled, in the *fabliau*. To the more extended use of dialogue is due mainly the greater length of the opening scene between clerk and peasant's wife. In the *fabliau* he makes several vain requests for food and lodging; in the *schwank* he is admitted at once. It is noteworthy that in each case his opening speech is given in the indirect form; in the *fabliau*

¹ Cf. pp. 348-9, above.

² A trace remains in the peasant's

"Que est ce, dame? avon nos vin?" (v. 187).

"Qu'est ce, dame? avon nos gastel?" (v. 211).

³ About 64 per cent.

it has more nearly the effect of direct discourse.¹ There is no monologue; mental states are for the most part directly described, as, for example, the effect upon the wife of each of the clerk's revelations. Dialogue, however, in the form of dualogue or group conversation, is the main method of carrying on the narrative. Omit from the last part of the scene the brief reference to the wife's emotions, and dialogue is all that is left. To dialogue, finally, we owe, as has been said, most of our knowledge of the character of the persons concerned.

For comic effects the fabliau, like the schwank, depends mainly on plot. There are the same comic disappointments; but they are now due not to the stupidity of any victim, but wholly to chance and to the intriguer. As a source of comic effect character is less important than in the schwank. Imperfections are moral, merely, not intellectual; the moral tag at the end does not affect the attitude of mere unjudging enjoyment. Since the story ends with the discovery of the priest, it is not necessary to let him off without the usual beating; this is described, however, with less than the usual detail. Death, as a source of comic effect, does not appear, since that part of the schwank is not included in the fabliau.

While the trouvère expands or elaborates the story, he does so without destroying the unities. His new incident, indeed,—the meeting of clerk and husband in the street,—involves a slight change of scene, and, later, when priest and wife are alarmed at the peasant's return, it involves a slight inconsistency in point of view. These are matters of minor importance, however. Unity of impression is

¹ In the schwank: "er . . . bat um Herberge;" in the fabliau,

"L'ostel li a li clers requis
Par charité et par amor" (vv. 26 f.).

nowise affected; unities of time, of persons, of action, are no less marked than in the schwank.

Unlike the analyses of Ballad and Fabliau, these analyses of Schwank and Fabliau leave one mainly impressed with the remarkable similarity of the types. Both are "subjective" in the sense that they are composed with reference to a definite comic effect. Yet both are impersonal,—give us no hint, beyond the suggestion of masculine authorship, of a man behind the composition,—are essentially anonymous. Both were intended for a more or less public recitation.¹ Both are realistic in effect. In both, time and place are vivid and near at hand. The persons are of the middle class, commonplace, unnamed, of a single generation. Their appearance is not mentioned; their characters are not emphasized, and not described, but suggested dramatically. A certain cynicism with regard to them is implied. In both, the preliminary motive is poverty; the minor motivation is excellent; the grasp of the story as a whole is noteworthy. Both are remarkable for proportion, relative emphasis, preparation for what is to come. In both, comic effects are due mainly to plot; and in the attitude toward the comic imperfections of character is neither satire nor sympathy. Both have marked unity, in every sense; and both are notably concrete and dramatic in effect.²

¹ The Fabliaux are intended "bei passender Gelegenheit öffentlich recitiert zu werden." J. Loth, *Die Sprichwörter und Sentenzen der Altfranzösischen Fabliaux*. They are, says Bédier, "destinés à la récitation publique." *Les Fabliaux*, p. 37.

² All that has just been said is equally true of Hans Sachs's *Der farendt Schuler mit dem Teuffelbannen*; schwank or fabliau become farce with the slightest of changes. The farce is obviously all dialogue, it is longer (2,150 words), and, like the fabliau, it is verse. The priest is received before the scholar, and both priest and Bewrin take part in turning out the scholar. The series of revelations does not appear. Instead, the final revelation is elaborated: the priest is compelled, disguised as the devil,

The fabliau manifestly differs from the schwank in that it is verse, and in its greater length, due in part to addition of new material, mainly, however, to an elaboration of what was already there.¹ Aside from these very obvious matters, however, the differences, while not without significance, are slight and rather subtle. In the fabliau we find ourselves in a world which, in its mention of the clerk of Paris, is a shade more real and a degree higher in the social scale. There is less mention of the furnishings of the room where the action takes place. The clerk's host is a man of greater importance than the peasant's. Background characters are added. The central motive,—the character and purpose of the hero,—is clearer. There is direct evidence of greater self-consciousness in the opening line and in the moral at the close. The latter interprets the story as an example of poetic justice. In conformity with this idea is the wife's refusal to admit the clerk. The story thus becomes more credible. The same effect is produced by the exclusion of the abnormally stupid victims, and of the soothsaying raven. The device which takes the raven's place, the clerk's story, with its series of similes, is indeed more probable, but at the same time more learned, more artificial,

to bring in wurst, semmel, and wine. The Bawer is frightened, but notices the resemblance to the priest. The wife declares that she would like to see the devil oftener in their house. Thus the tendency to give most space to what is most important, which increases as we pass from schwank to fabliau, is carried still further in the farce. The phase of life is practically that of the fabliau. There is the same underlying sense of poetic justice. There is still more, and more varied, group conversation. As in the schwank, however, the hero makes use of the belief in the supernatural to practice upon the stupidity of one of his victims; and the unexpected return of the husband is motivated. On the whole,—except for the increase in dialogue,—it does not appear in any way necessary to suppose fabliau or its equivalent to intervene between schwank and farce. It is an easy step from schwank to farce direct.

¹Cf. p. 367, below.

less effective. The absence of a special effort to delay the climax renders the fabliau, in this respect, inferior. The incremental repetition vanishes. There is an increase of over thirty per cent. in the amount of dialogue, and a greater diversity in the forms employed; group conversation marks an important advance in the art of dramatic narration. Comic disappointments are due no longer to the stupidity of the victim but to moral obliquity. The elaboration, finally, results in momentary disregard of the unities of place and point of view. The fabliau is, then, peculiar in the possession of a certain intellectual or rational quality, of which there is evidence in the self-conscious opening line, the notion of an underlying moral law, and in the substitution of the artificial series of similes for the soothsaying raven.

A further elaboration of this same story may be traced in the Scottish fabliau of *The Freiris of Berwik*, sometimes ascribed to Dunbar.¹ It is about 4,600 words in length,—more than three times as long as *Le Povre Clerc*, about six times as long as the mill scene in *Das Bürle*. The story is, in substance, as follows :

It happened one day in May that two Jacobin friars, Allane and Robert, were returning from the country to their monastery in the fair walled city of Berwick-upon-Tweed. As it drew toward night they stopped at an inn

¹ Professor W. H. Browne prints it with Dunbar's poems in his *Early Scottish Poets*. To Professor Henderson "it does not seem to be stamped with the impress of Dunbar's peculiar genius. It is too purely and lightly comic, too genial, and even too merely superficial, to be his. The irony possesses little of his subtlety, corrosiveness, or depth. The style, easy, simple, and apt though it be, lacks his peculiar strength and incisiveness." *Scottish Vernacular Literature*, p. 278. Professor G. Gregory Smith says: "The ascription of this piece to Dunbar has been doubted, but there is nothing in it unworthy of his metrical art or his satiric talent." *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, II, 288. The question of authorship is not involved in the present study. So long as it is unsettled, it will be convenient to speak of the author as Dunbar.

kept by one Symon Lawrear. Symon himself was away, and his wife, while she gave them ale and bread and cheese, refused them, in her husband's absence, any lodging other than the loft at one end of the hall. Thither the maid conducted them, made their bed, and closed them in.

However, Freir Robert, in quest of adventure, cut a hole in the floor, and was rewarded by sight of preparations for a feast. Presently Freir Johine, abbot of the Augustinian monastery, entered, and began to make merry with dame Aleson. But just as the table was spread they heard a great knocking at the door and Symon's voice calling for admittance. Wine, rabbits, capons, partridges, and plover were concealed in the cupboard, and Freir Johine under a great trough in the corner. While the maid swept the house and put out the fire, Aleson flung off her finery, got into bed, and let Symon knock and call to his heart's content. At last she rose, demanded who was there calling her name, and refused admittance to anyone. When Symon declared himself, she welcomed him heartily, hastily covered the board, and set soused calve's foot and sheep's head before him. He expressed a desire for company at this repast; a discreet cough informed him of the presence of the guests above, and he insisted upon their being asked to join him. In reply to his half apology for "such as we have," Freir Allane declared that here was God's plenty, but Freir Robert confessed that he had learned certain practices in Paris, over sea, and could provide whatever was desired. After turning toward the east, reading in his book, clapping his hands, groaning and glouring as if he were mad, and more hocus-pocus, all terrifying enough to Aleson, he directed her to go to the cupboard and bring forth wine, rabbits, capons, partridges, and plover. Aleson found what she had herself placed there, yet started back, as if terrified, crossed herself, and cried out that it was a great marvel.

The company now proceeded to enjoy these dainties. The friars drank "cup out," they and Symon sang loudly, and thus with good cheer they passed the long night. For the dame there was little pleasure in it, yet she must needs bear her part, a smile on her face and a heavy heart in her breast. At length Symon expressed a very natural wonder at the friar's skill. Robert replied that it was a very simple matter,—he had at his beck and call a servant who brought him whatever he desired. Symon wished to see this servant. Freir Robert at first refused outright, then made difficulties, but at length consented that he should appear in the comparatively harmless form of an Augustinian friar. Symon was stationed at the door, a staff in his hand, somewhat frightened,—but stout was his heart. Then Freir Robert conjured the evil spirit to appear in the likeness of a friar, in a black habit, from the great trough in the corner, and, with cowl drawn down over his face, harming no one, to leave that house and come there no more. And so it happened. As the black friar reached the door Robert called on Symon to strike hard. Symon brought down his staff

with such force on the abbot's neck that he himself fell and broke his head on a stone. Freir Johine missed the step and fell into a mire, but picked himself up and made off in haste, his clothing "nothing fair." Robert raised Symon from the floor, revived and reassured him. Thus Symon's head was broken, the abbot was fouled in the mire, and Aleson in no wise got her will.

We find ourselves here in a Present still more vivid,—a morning and a night in May,—in a place still more real,—the neighborhood of Berwick, whose walls and towers are celebrated in a manner characteristic of the early Scottish delight in description for its own sake. The scene of the action is now the interior of an inn, a hall with a loft for corn and hay, reached by a trap, at one end; sleeping rooms elsewhere; table, spread with rich cloth and fair napery above, chairs, fire, cupboard, in a corner a great trough for dough, a stone for grinding mustard; outside, a vast mire, wherein, missing the steps, one might fall. We continue to ascend the social ladder. Symon's inn betokens his importance. The intriguer is no peasant or poor clerk, but a friar; his victim, an abbot, whose supper was to be worthy of his rank. The moral elevation is much the same.

The most noteworthy phase of the elaboration of the story is in the direction of character. Each of the persons is introduced with a few lines of description. The victim, Freir Johine, was a "Blak Freir of grit renown:"

He had a prevy posterne of his awin,

Quhair he nicht ische, quhen that he list, vnknawin (vv. 127 f.).

While Symon Lawrear was but a "woundir gude hostillar," who had the usual qualities of good nature and gullibility, required by the story, his wife Aleson had gone far beyond her prototypes in cleverness. She was "dink" and "dangerous," and, not content with silence or mere passive explanations, she planned an active campaign to deceive her husband, feigning sleep and then indignation when he returned, and

an astonishment equal to his own at the discovery in the cupboard. Freir Allane, an addition of Dunbar's, was old, weary, lay still on the straw in the loft, declared himself content with Symon's simple fare. His only function in the story is to act as foil to Robert, who was young, vigorous, restless, hot of blood, cut a hole to see what was going on below, and at once devised and carried out a plan to conjure the dainties out of the cupboard and the abbot out of the house. Both these simple friars "with wyffis weill cowld gluder." Evidence of character, it is manifest, is obtained from epithet, from direct description, as well as from words and actions. Still we learn nothing of personal appearance.

Freir Robert's trick is motivated in much the same fashion as Bürle's,—not so much by desire for revenge or even by desire for the supper, as by delight in the art of gulling for its own sake. Add to this the rivalry of Jacobins and Augustinians, clearly implied. And there is, as has been said, greater emphasis upon the character of the intriguer, a gratuitous emphasis, one may say, since it is not necessary to explain the action, or, as with Bürle, to unify a longer and looser plot. There is the same care in the minor motivation, though Dunbar, like the trouvère, neglects to account for the husband's unexpected return. As in the schwank, the intriguer is permitted to remain in the house, but his bed of straw is moved to a loft, where he is locked up, supposedly unable to see or hear what goes on. Thus the story becomes more credible. Desire for credibility, however, does not exclude the pseudo-supernatural element, as it does in the fabliau, but gives it a form practically identical with that in the *Farendt Schuler*. Freir Robert's hocus-pocus, certainly, requires far more interesting and characteristic action of the wife, and Dunbar, to emphasize her cunning, dwells upon her fear, contrasts what she does

with what she feels. Nor does he fail to look into the minds of the other persons,—even of Freir Johine,—and thus mental states come to receive more attention than in schwank or fabliau.

Structurally, Dunbar carries still further the development of the single scene; he elaborates what was already there, adding nothing from without. He closes, not with a moral, but with a summary, and makes no comment on his story. He carries still further the emphasis of important matters.¹ He makes the same adequate preparation for what is to come, reveals the same grasp of his story as a whole.² The narrative is no less steady in its forward movement, but the pace is now slower, there is more delay, more suspense. The series of minor revelations, taken over, though with loss of one number and of incremental repetition, by the fabliau from the schwank, now disappears altogether. Instead we have the single revelation, with elaborate dialogue and minor actions, followed by the nightlong merry-making,³ then more dialogue and hocus-pocus, all leading up to the comic climax, and, at the same time, delaying it. This is the method of the *Farendt Schuler* and, manifestly, it is more dramatic, since the suspense is greater, and the monotony of the series is avoided. The usual contrasting situations and

¹ Cf. p. 367, below.

² Yet there are some minor inconsistencies. Thus the two friars feared that the gates would be closed (v. 47), and for this reason planned to spend the night at Symon's. Yet when, as they were making merry they heard the bell, "they were agast," because they knew that the gates were now closed (v. 77). Again, Aleson "covers the board" (v. 178), though she had already done so (v. 143). And, finally, Freir Robert conjures a good deal more out of the cupboard than Aleson put in. Cf. vv. 132 ff. and 151 ff. with vv. 361 ff. As a story grows longer it grows more difficult to handle.

³ This special delay, it will be remembered, is a virtue of the schwank, not found in the fabliau.

mental states, involved in the story, now receive greater emphasis. Merely for purposes of contrast with the hero is introduced, as has been said, the new figure of Freir Allane.

While, as in the schwank and the fabliau, it is never necessary for the plot that distinct series of actions should be carried on simultaneously, Dunbar is nevertheless careful to mark very clearly the transitions from the doings of one character or group of characters to the doings of another, to call attention to every shift of point of view. So he says :

Thus in the loft latt I thir freiris ly (v. 118).

And, after a mere description of Freir Johine,

Now thus in-to the toun I leif him still,
Bydand his tyme ; and turne agane I will
To this fair wyfe (vv. 129 ff.).¹

While there is relatively less dialogue than in the fabliau, absolutely there is a good deal more. Of the 4600 words, that is, about 2400, or .52, are in the form of direct discourse. In the fabliau there are only 1500 words in all, of which 960, or .64, are dialogue; and in the *Farendt Schuler* there are only 2150 words, so that Dunbar actually writes more dialogue than Sachs. Yet it is less dramatic in effect than the conversation in the fabliau. It is, indeed, used to make clear purpose and situation, and to express mental states; it even takes the place of narrative in Freir Johine's list of his contributions to the feast. But there is a distinctly non-dramatic tendency to separate speeches by narrative passages, and to mingle indirect with direct discourse. Thus

¹ Cf. vv. 164 ff., 256 ff., 498 ff.

Freir Robert said, 'I pray grit God him speid
 Him haill and sound in-to his travell,'
 And hir desyrit the stowp to fill of aill,
 'That we may drink, for I am wondir dry' (vv. 64 ff.).

There is a good deal of indirect discourse,—as in schwank and fabliau the first speech to the hostess is in this form. Furthermore, while there is dialogue, soliloquy, monologue, Dunbar neglects excellent opportunities for group conversation. Dialogue alone would not carry along the story as it does in the most important part of the fabliau.

Comic effects are, once more, mainly a matter of plot. In spite of his increased interest in character, Dunbar makes little or no attempt to develop its comic incongruities. The contrast between Allane and Robert is amusing, indeed, yet in no way comparable to Chaucer's contrast of Absolon and Nicholas, for instance; and though Aleson is described as "dink and dangerous," these qualities are not brought into comic relation with the plot, as they are in the case of Simkin's wife in the *Reeve's Tale*. The effect of the comic disappointments of the plot, however, is considerably heightened by Dunbar's elaboration, and the possibilities of Pain are more completely developed. Thus, as has been said, Aleson's fear is dwelt upon with more frequency and emphasis, and a good deal is made of the terrors of Johine, not mentioned in schwank or fabliau. Moreover, he is not permitted to escape unharmed, as in *Das Bürle*, or with a mere beating, as in *Le Povre Clerc*, but a fall into the mire is added to Symon's great blow, which now becomes even more disastrous for the innocent husband than for the guilty lover. Freir Robert thought, indeed, that Symon was dead, but this height of comic climax Dunbar does not permit us to enjoy. Manifestly, however, there is no thought of justice, poetic or other; there is no moral tag, appropriate or inappropriate, no

rationalization of the story, and enjoyment of it, as of the schwank, is purely unjudging and emotional.

If the fabliau in elaborating the story trespassed somewhat against the unities, Dunbar, in carrying on the elaboration, trespassed still farther. His description of Berwick is there for its own sake, simply, as is some of his description of character. There is, moreover, in the earlier part of the story, continual shift of point of view. But these, once more, are minor matters, and in the main Dunbar holds fast to the schwank-fabliau tradition of unity, —of time, of place, of action, of persons, of impression.

In spite, then, of its greater length, *The Freiris of Berwick* seems to be very nearly as conservative as *Le Povre Clerc* in its elaboration of the technique of *Das Bürle*. Characteristics common to schwank and fabliau, though doubtless more pronounced or more highly developed, are still, for the most part, preserved. There is the same "subjectivity," impersonality, fitness for recitation; the same realism and vividness; the same cynicism; the same careful motivation, grasp of the story as a whole, proportion, emphasis,¹ prepara-

¹ The relative elaboration of the various parts of the story, in its three forms, may be set forth in the following table:

	SCHWANK.		FABLIAU.		DUNBAR.	
	Words.	Per Cent.	Words.	Per Cent.	Words.	Per Cent.
A. Description.....	...	.....	.....	.....	216	.05
1. Introduction.....	80	.10	120	.08	216	.05
2. Reception of Hero.....	60	.07	210	.14	584	.12
3. Reception of Priest.....	55	.07	.....	.. ..	480	.10
4. Hero meets Husband.....	...	.....	180	.12	.....	.....
5. Arrival of Husband.....	75	.10	90	.06	400	.09
6. The Revelations.....	510	.66	846	.55	2640	.58
7. Moral.....	.....	.....	78	.05	.....	.....
8. Summary.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	48	.01
	780	1.00	1524	1.00	4584	1.00

tion; the same dependence on plot for comic effects; the same attitude toward comic imperfections of characters; the same concrete and dramatic method; and, finally, very nearly the same unity.

In certain respects *The Freiris of Berwick* differs from *Le Povre Clerc* and resembles *Das Bürle*. It resembles it in the absence of poetic justice; in the retention of the pseudo-supernatural as a means of gulling the husband; and in the special effort to delay the climax. But like *Le Povre Clerc* it is in verse, and it resembles it furthermore in its apparent connection with the real world, in the clearness of its central motive, and in its use of Pain as a source of comic effect.

Dunbar's technique owes much, then, to schwank and fabliau; and even for the little that is left we can claim no great originality for him, since his improvements were made under the very evident influence of his master, Chaucer. His metre is the familiar heroic couplet of the *Canterbury Tales*. The description of Berwick may have been inspired by a desire to outdo the descriptions prefixed to the *Miller's Tale* and the *Reeve's Tale*; like the opening lines of the *Clerk's Tale* it introduces matter not necessary for the story. The elaboration of character recalls Chaucer. There are two intriguers, as in the *Reeve's Tale*; but one has nothing to do; doubtless he is there only to make a contrast like that of Absolon and Nicholas in the *Miller's Tale*. The bits of character-description suggest Chaucer's method, though Dunbar is briefer and does not follow Chaucer's plan of describing two characters fully, then introducing to these a third. The very names, though they all occur in the French fabliaux, are doubtless taken from Chaucer—Johine, Allane, and Symon, from the *Reeve's Tale*, Aleson, from the *Miller's Tale*, Robert, perhaps, from the *Friar's Tale* (D. 1356). Again, the preliminary motive is not poverty, but, as in the *Reeve's Tale*, the intriguers come in wet and

weary, simply, desiring food and lodging. Freir Robert's use of the pseudo-supernatural to gull a stupid husband recalls Nicholas, in the *Miller's Tale*; their methods are much the same. Rough parallels for the verses used to mark transitions may be found in the *Franklin's Tale*.¹ It is even conceivable that the "mustard-stone," upon which Symon fell, was the same that tripped his namesake in the *Reeve's Tale*.² The mention of "Wednesday" as the day of the husband's departure recalls the similar and really necessary indication of the time of the husband's absence in the *Miller's Tale*. And for the final summary close parallels are to be found in the closing lines of Miller and Reeve.

III. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

We have now traced the development of the story of the *Wife's Confession* from Comic Ballad (with incidental contrast with the technique of the more primitive Simple Ballad), through the Fabliau, to the Short Story; and we have traced the parallel development of the story of the *Lodging for the Night* from the Schwank (with incidental contrast with the technique of the more primitive Märchen), through the Old French Fabliau, to the Scottish Fabliau. The first line is longer than the second; it begins with a more primitive form and ends with one more highly elaborated. We have now, by way of summary and conclusion, to combine the results of these inquiries, and, disregarding the subject-matter, the story, to trace the development of manner, of technique, alone, from the simplest type to the most complex.

¹ Cf. vv. 1084 f., 1099 f.

² This stone, Professor Browne explains, was used for grinding mustard. Perhaps this was the purpose of the stone in the floor of the miller's house.

For *Queen Eleanor's Confession* part, at least, of Professor Gummere's characterization of *Babylon* still holds: "Here the situation retains its sovereignty, and keeps the ballad brief, abrupt, springing and pausing, full of incremental repetition, and mainly in dialogue form."¹ But there is now something more than bare situation; we know where the dialogue took place, who the speakers were, how they felt. We learn what happened just before and just after the confession. We are conscious of something like a special effort to preserve unity of tone, to produce a purely comic effect.

Das Bürle represents a higher stage of the development. It is not alone that prose is less primitive than verse, the narrator and his audience, than the chorus; the situation has begun to lose its supremacy, elements of narration are thrust forward. We learn now not merely what the setting was, but, in a measure, how it looked. We know when the action took place, what sort of people took part in it, just why it was that they came together. Abruptness vanishes; the action moves more slowly and steadily, with the special pause, for suspense, as, through a series of ballad-like repetitions, we approach the climax. Dialogue yields to narrative. In general, the art is manifestly more self-conscious, more is made of the comic possibilities of the story, comic effects are more nicely calculated. So far as the scene in the mill is concerned the unities are all preserved.

We have already traced the development of this story in *Le Povre Clerc*,—the change back to verse, and the further increase in length. Due conceivably to the persistence of ballad traditions are the closer connections with the real world, accompanied by slight loss in visualization,

¹ *The Popular Ballad*, p. 111.

the rise in the social scale, the increase in dialogue, with group conversation. But all repetition now vanishes. Character is more firmly grasped, the central motive becomes clearer. Most notable is the development of the tendency towards self-consciousness and reflection. Comic effects are more carefully calculated. Unities of place and point of view are not so well preserved.

Le Povre Clerc and *Le Chevalier qui fist sa fame confesse* are not far from the same level; the latter is, however, a little longer and is clearly the more highly developed. It lacks, necessarily the homely details of *Das Bürle* and *Le Povre Clerc*, yet the trouvère was at some pains, evidently, to visualize the dimly lighted room where the knight heard his wife's confession. And he was far more careful than the composer of the *Clerc* to give date and duration of action. His persons, though higher in the social scale, and though still types, are a shade more real, more complex; their relations to one another are more clearly realized. Their thoughts, purposes, emotions, are traced with far greater care. The whole is more elaborately motivated. Structurally, the *Chevalier* has a more elaborate introduction, and adds an important concluding scene, for which, of course, no parallel was necessary in the *Clerc*. Yet the main situation still holds its own. The amount of dialogue is the same, but there is no group conversation. No conventional series like that carried over by the *Clerc* from the schwank, is carried over by the *Chevalier* from the ballad. There are changes of scene, carefully indicated by connective passages. Comic effects are less obvious, less varied, perhaps, but more refined, even more subtle. In still higher degree than the *Clerc*, the *Chevalier* gives evidence of the rational or critical quality, the faculty of comment upon life. It deals with the unities more freely: there are distinct changes of place

and point of view ; the action falls into two parts, separated by several days ; a minor character is described.

Beyond the *Chevalier* the *Freiris of Berwick* marks no great advance ; yet in certain directions there is, thanks mainly to the influence of Chaucer, a distinct development. The action is for the first time dated, though the passage of time is not so carefully followed as in the *Chevalier*. There is for the first time a relatively full description of a real city ; and the immediate scene of the action surpasses all predecessors in the vividness of homely detail. The persons are more complex, more real, and a minor character is introduced, not for the sake of plot, like the prior in the *Chevalier*, but for the sake of character-contrast merely. The *Freiris* thus goes farther than the *Chevalier* in elaboration of time, place, character. But, though emotions are traced, and we see the inside of several minds, we make no advance in this direction. Nor is the action more carefully motivated, nor the story more credible, better proportioned, more coherent ; nor the wife more clever in extricating herself from an embarrassing position. Yet there is more skilful delay, more suspense,—a development, however, of that found in *Bürle*. There is greater variety, though no greater subtlety, of comic effects. The unities are more carefully preserved. The peculiar intellectual quality present in both the fabliaux, particularly noteworthy in the *Chevalier*, is wholly lacking in the *Freiris*. There is no reflection, no comment on life or on the story as a whole.

The debt of a modern Short Story like *L'Inutile Beauté* to popular and medieval narration will now be still more apparent. To place the action of one's story in real and vivid settings, temporal, spatial, social, is nothing new. It is nothing new to create real characters, thinking, speaking, acting, like human beings, differing significantly one from another. It is nothing new to construct a plot with due

regard for the unities, proportion,¹ emphasis, suspense, climax, to develop it by means of lively and dramatic dialogue and of concrete and suggestive action. It is nothing new, finally, to abstract from one's story its moral significance, to see in it a criticism of life. Modern narrative art at its best adds nothing to these technical virtues; it has but elaborated what it found ready to its hand.

We have been dealing with but a restricted group of documents, yet all are so nearly typical that it is not likely that a more comprehensive study would greatly modify our conclusions. So far as the development from Ballad and Schwank to Fabliau is concerned, it would seem to be governed by laws of growth and change much like those which govern the transition from Ballad to Epic.² Though always in lower degree, there is the same increase in scope, in organization, in abstraction, and in elaboration. There is, it is true, but little increase in art, in felicity of style. And for increase in architectural power there is little opportunity. The Ballad is primarily a simple situation, and adds the elements of narration so cautiously that this situation still remains supreme. Thus it inevitably has all the unities, as well as excellent proportion and emphasis. It may even have suspense and climax; but these are, in all probability, a more inevitable contribution of the Schwank, a result of the narrator's desire to tell his story in the one way best suited to produce the comic effect. The Fabliau of

¹ It is interesting to note that the chief situation, in ballad, schwank, and fabliau, always occupies more than one-half of the story. De Maupassant's interest in a general question leads him to give equal space to an abstract discussion, leaving only a third of *L'Inutile Beauté* for the main scene or situation. Omit the discussion, surely not to the detriment of the story as a work of art, and the old proportion would be restored.

² Cf. *Ballad and Epic*, pp. 307 ff.

average length (such as those just under consideration) makes no great demand upon the grasp and foresight of the trouvère, and contributes but little to the development of plot-construction. But it must not be forgotten that there are other fabliaux, longer and more elaborate, which make no small demands upon their authors and very considerable contribution to the narrative art in all its phases.¹ To the technique of such fabliaux may be traced much of Chaucer's skill, and they go far towards bridging the gulf between Fabliau and Short Story.

WALTER MORRIS HART.

¹ Like *Du Vair Palefroi*, *Le Lai d'Aristote*, and others, discussed in the study of the *Reeve's Tale*, pp. 30 ff.